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Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Economic and Social Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV). It is structured in two main parts: the first part provides regional perspectives on two aspects of the current global agenda, namely regional efforts in support of the implementation and follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and regional support for enhancing the means of implementation. The second part covers developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation, including additional policy matters addressed during the ministerial sessions of the regional commissions; efforts to promote coherence at the regional level, including through the respective regional coordination mechanisms convened by the regional commissions, as mandated by the Council; cooperation with non-United Nations regional organizations to promote development; and enhanced cooperation between the regional commissions.

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I. Regional perspectives on the global agenda

A. Supporting the implementation and follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: regional efforts and perspectives

1. With the adoption by Member States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the focus has moved towards implementation at the national and regional levels. To that end, the regional commissions have scaled up and deepened their efforts in support of their member States by promoting a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development: providing policy advice and technical assistance to member States for the integration and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; providing a platform for political dialogue, exchange of experiences and peer learning within the region and with other regions; and strengthening analytical and statistical work.

2. In that context and to focus their efforts, the regional commissions have identified a number of selected areas, in accordance with their mandates and recognized assets and expertise. Within those areas, they have institutionalized, deepened and broadened their partnerships in support of implementation at the country level. That includes signing a statement of collaboration with the United Nations Development Group to work more closely with United Nations country teams, including on the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and statistics; forging partnerships with specialized agencies for sectoral analysis, reviews and capacity development; and building on prior strategic partnerships for reviews of the Millennium Development Goals to prepare and launch the first regional reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals, including with regional and subregional organizations, the multilateral development banks and United Nations organizations and agencies.

3. The present section provides information on the focus and contributions made by the regional commissions in selected areas to support the implementation and follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda.

Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national development planning and fiscal frameworks

4. Building on their efforts in support of the framing and adoption of the 2030 Agenda by States, including through regional consultations on development goals and financing for development, immediately following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda the regional commissions engaged themselves to raise awareness in their regions of the need for an integrated approach to its implementation and follow-up. Partnerships have been built, including with United Nations country teams, with the aim of facilitating the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda and the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national strategies and policy and fiscal frameworks and programmes.

5. Leveraging their normative and convening powers, the regional commissions have mobilized regional, subregional and national stakeholders to adapt local development frameworks for the implementation and follow-up to and review of the Goals.

6. The regional commissions have engaged in multiple initiatives aimed at strengthening local capacity to implement the Goals. They include developing applied research projects, conducting and disseminating thematic studies, providing technical cooperation and advisory services for the mainstreaming of the Goals and convening knowledge-sharing dialogues. In so doing, they have been leveraging their multidisciplinary expertise and capacity and providing insight into the cross-sectoral transferability of good practices and lessons learned among countries.

7. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is currently undertaking an extensive review exercise to examine the extent of alignment of national strategies, policies and institutions with the Goals. The review will allow ESCWA to present analyses of and rationales for accelerating the implementation of the Goals through better regional cooperation. ESCWA has also worked on synergizing development recommendations with the implementation of the Goals, specifically in committing itself to following up on and reviewing national development planning recommendations and guidelines developed in the framework of the Partnership for Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. To ensure coherence in its efforts, ESCWA has established a dedicated unit for the Goals tasked with the coordination of its multidisciplinary efforts and collaboration with involved stakeholders and partners. The partnerships aim to facilitate the mainstreaming of the Goals into national and regional implementation and follow-up processes.

8. As part of its contribution to raising awareness of the need for a people-centred and planet-sensitive development agenda and to promote an integrated approach to implementation, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) launched a study entitled "Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation". The study outlined a conceptual framework, normative shifts in policy stances, strategies and policy options. It also offered perspectives on institutional frameworks to support the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and proposed specific options for a coherent response at the regional level. ESCAP is currently developing a regional resource facility to complement the work of its subregional offices in assisting countries with the integration of the Goals into national planning and budgeting frameworks and to generate and capture innovative approaches on how to implement the Goals through cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

9. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is working alongside the African Union to synergize the developmental goals and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. ECA has worked to raise awareness among member States of the need for an integrated approach for the implementation of and follow-up to both Agenda 2063 and the Goals and is engaged in fostering the integration of Agenda 2063 and the Goals into national agendas, developing an integrated set of indicators for monitoring and follow-up on implementation of the Goals, rationalizing implementation and report mechanisms and undertaking an analytical approach to convening think tanks, policy experts and government officials for capacity-building and implementation projects.

10. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has recently launched a digital repository for data storage and dissemination, in which a comprehensive set of national, subnational and sectoral development plans,

programmes and agendas from the region can be found. The digital repository serves as an efficient platform for regional actors to access data and identify best practices, experiences and approaches regarding the implementation of the Goals.

Regional forums on sustainable development: platforms for regional follow-up and review, promoting policy coherence, alignment and peer learning and linking the national to the global

11. Building on the mandate in General Assembly resolution 67/290 for the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, including through regional meetings, the commissions established regional forums on sustainable development. By the end of May 2016, the third iterations of the forums in the Asia-Pacific and Arab regions had been held: in Bangkok from 3 to 5 April and in Amman on 29 and 30 May, respectively. The second session of the Africa Forum for Sustainable Development was held in Cairo from 17 to 19 May. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) held its first forum in Geneva on 10 May as a special informal segment of the meeting of the Executive Committee. At its thirty-sixth session, held in Mexico from 23 to 27 May, ECLAC established the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

12. The regional forums bring together member States with other stakeholders, including regional and subregional partner organizations, civil society and the private sector, to follow up on and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the regions. Building on national experiences of implementation and follow-up and review, the forums promote peer learning and cross-fertilization of good practices and approaches, notably on integrated and cross-sectoral approaches. They also promote the alignment of the 2030 Agenda with regional and subregional visions and agendas, thus promoting policy coherence and the optimization of efforts and resources, while addressing specific regional priorities and challenges. In addition, they provide an institutional and well-harmonized link to the global follow-up and review at the high-level political forum because they build on the convening power, analytical capacities and partnerships of the regional commissions. The work of the forums will also benefit from the regional assessments of progress with the Goals planned by the commissions and their partners in the regions.

13. At the third session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, in April 2016, it was decided that, while the future form and function of the Forum should be guided by decisions taken at the high-level political forum, the Forum would continue to be convened annually as an inclusive intergovernmental forum, preparatory to the high-level political forum. Future sessions of the Forum will serve as a platform to: (a) support countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including through capacity development, in particular in those countries with special needs; (b) provide a regional perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by identifying regional trends and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned; and (c) support review and monitoring of progress and follow-up at the regional level. The Forum recognized that, while the countries of the Asia-Pacific region were moving rapidly to implement the 2030 Agenda, much work was needed to bring about the necessary transformation. A number of regional megatrends must be harnessed to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: urbanization, economic and trade integration, rising incomes, changing patterns of production and consumption and the development of cross-border infrastructure.

Relevant subregional platforms could act as forums for follow-up and review at the subregional level in relation to both progress towards the achievement of the Goals and areas that need particular attention.

14. ESCWA organized the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development in Jordan in May 2016, in cooperation with the member organizations of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, including the League of Arab States. The proposed focus and objectives of the Forum were to promote a better and deeper understanding of the 2030 Agenda, move from commitment to action at national level and achieve the Goals by addressing regional challenges and priorities, ensuring that no one is left behind in moving forward. Building on the results of the first two sessions of the Forum, the third session presented successful examples of integration at national level and included presentations from member States that have developed new legislation, policies and plans to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

15. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development concluded on 19 May in Cairo with the adoption of a series of key messages regarding the effective implementation and monitoring of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The theme of the Forum was "Ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063". The key messages are clustered in five areas and are expected to support national implementation efforts and inform global debate. They include: transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals; inclusive transformation for sustainable development; an integrated results framework and integrated implementation, including means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063; integrated follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 at the global, regional and national levels; and a demographic dividend road map for 2017. ECA has held consultations with the African Union Commission on the modalities to be adopted for the review and validation of the new report on the Sustainable Development Goals for Africa. That review process will be mainly undertaken through the Regional Forum.

16. ECE held its first Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in April 2016, following a consultative process with member States, regional United Nations entities, other international and regional organizations and civil society, to determine the most effective modality for regional follow-up to and review of the Goals. ECE is expected to build a "docking station" platform for regional follow-up and review, connecting policymaking processes at various levels. The details of the platform are still under discussion and awaiting global decisions of the high-level political forum. Member States decided on an ad hoc format for the 2016 Regional Forum — an extended informal session of the Executive Committee. At the session, regional plans and initial steps for implementing follow-up to and review of the Goals were the main topics of discussion, based on the results of a regional survey on the Goals. The outcome of the session will guide regional inputs to the high-level political forum in 2016.

17. The Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was established as an integrated regional mechanism to follow up on and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the Goals and targets, the means of implementation of the Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The outcomes of the Forum will also contribute to the follow-up to

and review of those agendas at the global level, including at the high-level political forum and at the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up. The Regional Forum will build on the work relating to the agendas undertaken in the ECLAC subsidiary bodies.

Strengthening States' data and statistical capacities

18. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, all regions need and demand new, better and more comprehensive data and statistics. While the capacity of national statistical systems has improved over the past decade in most regions, there are enormous variations between and within regions and large gaps remain in the capacity of developing countries to produce indicators for the Goals. Gaps in the coverage and quality of the data to measure progress towards the achievement of the Goals reflect inadequate national statistical systems that span institutional and resource factors and the scope of national statistical programmes, which do not capture the breadth of development issues covered in the Goals. Areas needing improvement include international statistical standards or guidelines that can capture a significant number of issues, administrative data, civil registration systems and statistical survey programmes and the speed at which current statistics can be made available for decision-making.

19. The regional commissions have accompanied member States in their discussions of the global indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda, collaborating with the Statistical Commission to establish regional positions and facilitate global consensus on the framework. They are also supporting their member States in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

20. The regional commissions have also been supporting the regional harmonization of statistics and national capacity development efforts to improve data and statistics collection, processing, comparability, dissemination and use for evidence-based policymaking at the national level, including by working with the regional conferences on statistics and by providing capacity-building and technical assistance to national institutes of statistics. Those actions are crucial to supporting member States in addressing the data revolution challenges relating to the 2030 Agenda.

21. ECA organized a high-level conference, following requests from regional heads of State to discuss the data revolution in Africa and its implications for Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The high-level conference on data revolution, held in Addis Ababa in March 2015, resulted in the Africa Data Consensus, which, among other things, contains a set of principles for implementing the data revolution, in which a partnership of all data communities was urged to create a vibrant ecosystem able to provide timely and disaggregated data for the public good and for inclusive development. Besides the Consensus, and in a similar manner to the other Commissions, ECA led the process of coordinating African countries in the development of the global indicator framework relating to the Goals. As the secretariat of the Statistical Commission for Africa, ECA plays a prominent role in building the statistical capacity of member States and will continue its support for strengthening national statistical systems. It is also actively providing technical support to member States on the continent in the development of comparable statistical data across time and space.

22. The progressive consolidation of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC as the main forum for discussion and coordination between national statistical offices in Latin America and the Caribbean has been an asset in supporting the above-mentioned global processes and efforts and in channelling ECLAC technical assistance and capacity development efforts to its member States. That will continue to be the case as they implement the agenda and establish mechanisms to follow up on and review progress. Furthermore, ECLAC has agreed to work on non-traditional data sources. That kind of participation in the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data is the expression of a new approach to data and indicators in the context of the data revolution. Lastly, ECLAC has collaborated on several inter-agency documents on the gaps remaining for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and intends to tap into the experience acquired from the Millennium Development Goals to continue to support member States in the follow-up to and review of activities for the Sustainable Development Goals.

23. In addition to joining the other regional commissions in support of the global processes and efforts on indicators and capacity-building, ESCWA has focused its efforts on four aspects:

(a) Comprehensive assessments of national statistical systems, focusing on the surveys, censuses and other operations in thematic areas, the technical infrastructure, institutional and legal frameworks and coordination between producers of official statistics at the national level;

(b) Assisting member States in formulating national strategies for the development of statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account also the specific needs of vulnerable States;

(c) Guiding national statistical offices towards the use of available alternative data sources to cover increased and increasing demand for statistical data by policymakers and other users;

(d) Advising national statistical systems on establishing national frameworks of indicators for follow-up to and review of the agreed development goals and priorities of national development strategies.

24. ECE works with partners to support the monitoring of progress towards achieving the Goals in the region and develop measurements of sustainable development by streamlining statistical work in the region in connection with the Goals; developing methods, standards and guidance to enhance the quality and comparability of statistics and monitoring of the Goals; and building capacity for reporting on indicators and supporting countries in the compilation and reporting of indicators for the Goals in the region. In particular, it develops standards and tools to modernize statistical production and find efficiencies so that statistical offices can respond to new information needs and the challenge of reporting on the Goals. The global assessments of national statistical systems in countries in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia provide an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the institutional, organizational and technical capacity of the countries to produce official statistics that are internationally acceptable. Those assessments provide detailed recommendations for the sustainable development of national statistical systems. In addition, ECE works with member States to build

their capacity to develop statistical systems that significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data.

25. Based on the 2015 ESCAP statistics database, it is estimated that less than one third of the indicators for the Goals can be produced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Gaps and areas in need of improvement have been identified that are similar to those set out above. Furthermore, at its fourth session the ESCAP Committee on Statistics identified priorities for addressing the implications of the 2030 Agenda for statistical development in the region. ESCAP will support member States in political commitment, capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and global statistical methodological development. It is also working to find solutions to data gaps and capitalize on existing and upcoming networks and partnerships. In addition, it has established an expert group of statisticians and disaster risk reduction experts to develop a regionally agreed basic range of disaster statistics and a disaster-related statistics framework.

B. Enhancing the means of implementation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: regional efforts and perspectives

26. In addition to supporting the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda, the regional commissions also work to enhance the capacities and means of implementation of their member States regarding commitments under the 2030 Agenda.

Identifying and promoting innovative sources of financing

27. As mandated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the regional commissions are deploying their expertise in support of the national resource mobilization of member States for financing for development, while continuing to analyse the international and regional contexts and factors affecting such mobilization efforts. They have been promoting regional cooperation as a means of shaping a conducive, enabling environment for national resource mobilization, including through the holding of regional forums and seminars on financing for development and tax cooperation. They have also initiated processes and analysis to follow up on and review commitments made thus far in the financing for development agenda.

28. ESCAP held the first follow-up regional consultation on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on 30 and 31 March 2016 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. Participants underscored the significance of regional platforms and the need to foster regional cooperation and partnerships in financing for development. They recognized a need to establish an inclusive, participatory and broad-based regional tax forum for sustainable development. ESCAP was requested to take stock of approaches to financing infrastructure in the region, support knowledge-sharing on policies and practices for financing infrastructure, including public-private partnerships, and harness financial inclusion policies to support sustainable development. A critical issue in the discussions was the need to strengthen and develop national and regional capital markets to meet the long-term financing requirements for investment in sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. In preparation for the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, ESCAP also organized a regional seminar on transformative financing for the

achievement of gender equality by 2030, held on 18 and 19 February 2016 in Bangkok, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The recommendations arising from the seminar emphasized the need to pursue a comprehensive approach to financing the 2030 Agenda and explore the potential of diverse sources of funding, including new, emerging and long-term sources, for sustainable and equitable financing. Particular emphasis was laid on the issue of gender and taxation. In addition, ESCAP also promotes regional risk-pooling mechanisms, especially in small countries, and parametric insurance schemes that provide new opportunities to address disaster risks.

29. ECLAC hosted a multi-stakeholder regional consultation on financing for development in March 2015 that served to identify key regional issues, including illicit financial flows, achieving greater equality, closing development gaps and securing funding for infrastructure and social inclusion. The participants also emphasized the importance of gender perspectives. The outcome of the regional consultation served as input for the preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in July 2015. In view of the impact of the debt burden on the economic and social progress of the Caribbean countries, ECLAC proposed a debt relief initiative involving multilateral credit institutions and the creation of a subregional resilience fund. It recommended that the Caribbean Community should seek an agreement with the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to gradually write off all multilateral external public debt. In return, the beneficiary countries would make annual payments into a Caribbean resilience fund, which could be managed by the Caribbean Development Bank, whose main goals would be to address natural disasters, finance climate change adaptation and mitigation measurements and boost social development.

30. ECA estimated the overall financial implications and resource requirements to achieve its development objectives and the African transformation agenda to be substantial. The infrastructure gap alone was estimated at around $100 billion per annum, with climate financing accounting for additional costs. The importance of national savings and improvements in public revenue collection, potential revenue from combating illicit financial flows and the significance of private capital flows as sources for development financing are being strongly emphasized. Improving governance and ensuring an enabling investment climate for increased domestic and foreign investment is also vital. Over the past years, ECA has been actively engaged in carrying out analytical work in a number of areas aimed at realizing sustainable development in Africa in general and the Goals in particular. It has supported the work and report of the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, contributing some chapters of the report and providing communications support and technical advice to the Panel. It also supported the advocacy and follow-up efforts relating to implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. Much of its work built on the outcomes of the ninth African Development Forum, held in Morocco in October 2014, on the theme of "Innovative financing for Africa's transformation", at which the Marrakech consensus was adopted. The consensus outlined key commitments to innovative financing for the transformation of Africa and provided guidance for ECA technical support for the regional consultations to be held in advance of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, in 2015.

31. In the Arab region, the discussion on financing for development focused on the importance of financing the immediate need to rebuild the capital stock in conflict-affected countries. A major regional concern was the widening gap between the requirements for meeting the Goals and the existing availability of finance. The situation had worsened in the region owing to the spread of conflicts, the decline of official development assistance from traditional donors, except in response to meeting crisis situations, and the worsening fiscal situation of major regional donors in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council owing to the plunge in oil prices. Some of the innovative sources of financing discussed from an Arab regional perspective included revenue mobilization through pro-poor taxation; controlling tax evasion and tax avoidance and illicit financial flows; harnessing private sector financing sources by addressing investment risks in the region; and identifying new international financing sources to address the limited fiscal space facing most countries in the region.

32. ECE is actively engaged in the mobilization of private resources for infrastructure development and the provision of public services through its work on public-private partnerships. Engaging multiple partners, it is developing international standards and recommendations for policymakers on how to use public-private partnerships in sectors that are crucial to advancing the 2030 Agenda, including water and sanitation, renewable energy, smart and sustainable cities and health. ECE activities have sought to address the existing knowledge gap on good practices and facilitate the exchange of experiences, as was done at its recent international forum on implementing the 2030 Agenda through effective, people-first public-private partnerships. In addition, it supports the efforts of member States to upgrade their capacity to undertake public-private partnerships. Limitations in that capacity constrain their ability to structure public-private partnerships in a way that protects the interest of the public sector.

Leveraging science, technology and innovation

33. The regional commissions have promoted the leveraging of science, technology and innovation regional platforms aimed at achieving development goals. They have produced successful results in several areas, including public policy standard-setting for inclusive access to digital services, student engagement and talent clustering, building early-warning and climate change resilience systems and mapping science, technology and innovation indicators and data gathering as part of broader capacity-building and structural change efforts.

34. ECLAC remains the technical secretariat for the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies, further consolidating its role as a regional focal point for science, innovation and technology cooperation. In that regard, the fifth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City in August 2015, led to the adoption of the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will serve as an important input for the global process of reviewing outcomes and preparing a new agreement within the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society. ECLAC is the technical secretariat for that process, which has presiding officers, national focal points and working groups on various areas of action related to the adoption of information and communications technology (ICT).

35. ECA support in the areas of science, technology and innovation and in ICT policy development and strategic analysis has contributed to the articulation and formulation of policy with a significant impact in the region. It has successfully influenced regional processes through periodic publications with in-depth analyses of science, technology and innovation policy; contributed to the establishment of youth and innovation curricula in 6 African universities and an innovation and entrepreneurship summer school in 17 African universities; supported member States in the development or updating of national ICT strategies, policies and review mechanisms; and led the regional review of the World Summit on the Information Society. In 2016, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development requested ECA assistance to organize an annual regional review of the World Summit in support of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In addition, ECA has undertaken work on model laws on cybersecurity, has co-hosted a high-level policy meeting on agricultural biotechnology with the African Union and also co-hosted the Science Forum 2016 in Addis Ababa, bringing more than 800 scientists, industrialists and policymakers together on topics of agricultural research.

36. ECE facilitates engagement with science, technology and innovation platforms by implementing a programme of innovation performance reviews in countries with economies in transition, looking at the factors driving innovation, including the impact of public policies. Based on a shared diagnosis of identified challenges, programme reviews offer recommendations to improve innovation performance and enhance innovation capacity. Feedback on recommendations is given in an intergovernmental setting that facilitates the exchange of experiences. The second cycle of reviews was initiated in 2016, envisaging a better alignment with the Goals and exploring the contributions that innovation can make to advance the 2030 Agenda.

37. ESCWA is involved in science, technology and innovation platforms to complement regional capacities and resources, partnering with member States for its Technology Centre based in Amman. In coordination with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and others, ESCWA has been developing an innovation scoreboard to standardize measurable indicators in the region. In coordination with UNDP, ESCWA is developing and will track an Arab innovation index, with the objective of leveraging data to inform policy and guide strategies in collaboration with member State institutions, better assess legislative gaps, develop national technologies and contribute to achieving the relevant goals of the 2030 Agenda. With other regional commissions, ESCWA has been actively participating in the work of the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, voicing regional priorities to leverage international experience and best practices for regional challenges and aligning and integrating science, technology and innovation efforts for sustainable development in the region.

38. ESCAP enjoys ample scope for collaboration with regard to science, technology and innovation topics, thanks to the presence of technologically advanced countries with significant research and investment portfolios and corresponding potential for regional knowledge-sharing platforms encouraging a culture of innovation in countries at all levels of development. The newly created ESCAP Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science,

Technology and Innovation will support regional work for the creation and diffusion of science, technology and innovation platforms and policy know-how, beginning with a study on the theme of "Harnessing science, technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific" in May 2016. During the third session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, science, technology and innovation were highlighted as necessary for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. ESCAP has already leveraged transboundary cooperation for disaster risk reduction in multiple early warning mechanisms for the region in relation to tsunami, coastal hazards and tropical cyclones. Building on that success, ESCAP will further promote and strengthen regional capacity-building efforts in relation to river basin floods, flash floods, lake outbursts and landslides. ESCAP is committed to leveraging its existing institutional tools to harness achievements in the field of science, technology and innovation in the region in order to address the challenges of countries with special needs.

Tapping South-South cooperation and regional partnerships

39. The regional commissions are ideally positioned to facilitate South-South and triangular modalities of cooperation, as well as inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships. In the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, leveraging South-South, regional and subregional partnerships becomes even more essential. The commissions are committed to enabling more inclusive and effective partnerships through regional integration, institutional mechanisms, policy advice, knowledge sharing and capacity-building efforts.

40. ECLAC supports multiple regional and subregional integration processes, helping to forge a common vision for member States in the region and partners beyond. It has provided technical assistance to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), addressing the international financial crisis and preparing integration indicators, and assisted the Working Group on Financial Integration of the Union of South American Nations in tackling interregional negotiations with the Asia-Pacific region and China in particular. ECLAC has also organized high-level meetings jointly with the Union of South American Nations, CELAC and other multilateral institutions and international organizations to discuss the governance of natural resources in the context of target 8.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, i.e. to improve progressively global resource efficiency in consumption and production while endeavouring to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. Lastly, ECLAC complements other regional institutions in assessing South-South cooperation outcomes through reporting, presentations and seminars on various topics, such as value chains and infrastructure, public safety policies, information technology, electrical energy and the regional implications of free trade agreements. Its overall efforts in promoting regional integration include the use of the energy efficiency indicators database to provide evaluation of comparable national and international policy trends and outcomes in energy efficiency. The project is a success, as the Governments of 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries have progressively incorporated new participants in the consensus and methodology of measuring energy efficiency policies.

41. ESCAP leverages the strong institutions and enormous potential for South-South cooperation in Asia, as evidenced by the establishment of multilateral platforms, such as the New Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Silk Road Fund and the newly announced

China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund. South-South trade, investment and economic integration are important assets for growth and sustainable development and ESCAP is consistently engaged with capacity-building at the regional and national levels to support member States in benefiting from partnership opportunities through initiatives such as the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, which resulted in the adoption in March 2016 of a cross-border regional trade agreement; indigenous innovation and technology transfer processes; environmental protection standards; and intellectual property frameworks. ESCAP efforts in South-South cooperation also address capacity gaps in disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the region. Another successful ESCAP initiative is the North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum, which has met annually since 2014 and decided in 2015 to focus on the role of South-South and triangular modalities of cooperation to explore implementation of the Goals in the region.

42. ECA is providing expert knowledge and policy advice to member States and supporting the creation of an African research collaboration facility that will build policy research capacities by enabling cross-agency and cross-country collaboration between national, subregional and regional policymakers. It also facilitates effective interregional cooperation with the other regional commissions and United Nations entities, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, in support of development activities promoting equality; environmental-economic accounting and statistics; mobile technologies for data collection and effective decision-making; and strengthening the ability of small island developing States to assess progress and monitor implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. ECA is also developing a partnership agreement with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, as part of triangular cooperation efforts aimed at promoting mutual African-Arab economic benefits in areas such as inclusive and sustainable growth and social development in support of structural transformation, in line with the priorities set out in Agenda 2063, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the 2030 Agenda.

43. The engagement of ESCWA with non-United Nations regional organizations is exemplified by its partnership with the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies. Through its ministerial councils, the League has collaborated closely with ESCWA in defining regional priorities, articulating regional positions and raising awareness of the issues and processes around the 2030 Agenda. The Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, held in May 2016, was a recent example of productive collaboration with the League. ESCWA also engages with other non-United Nations regional organizations to promote sustainable development. They include intergovernmental bodies, such as the subsidiary bodies of the League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, non-governmental organizations and regional research institutes and foundations. The strategic partnerships that ESCWA has established with those entities are aimed at influencing development policy, enhancing the impact of thought leadership

interventions and building regional capacity and consensus around key issues, in addition to facilitating the exchange of experiences and solutions between developing countries, both within and beyond the region.

44. Through its forum on public-private partnerships and its International Public-Private Partnership Centre of Excellence, ECE provides expertise to develop and cultivate productive partnerships with the private sector and international organizations. The network of specialized support centres facilitates the exchange of good practices, promotes the goals of the 2030 Agenda by focusing on "people-first" development challenges and acts as a coherent mechanism for South-South cooperation.

Translating regional models into global public goods

45. The regional commissions have developed innovative frameworks, measurement standards and monitoring mechanisms that, in addition to benefiting their respective regions, have shown potential as global solutions once modelled at the global level and adapted to specific needs in other regions. Those successful regional innovations are used to tackle problems such as illicit financial flows, climate change, energy efficiency, data access and health issues.

46. ECE has supported pioneering initiatives in areas such as transport, trade facilitation standards and environmental preservation and management. Specifically, at its forty-seventh session, the Statistical Commission agreed on the need to improve climate change statistics and develop a global framework of climate change indicators based on ECE recommendations. ECE experts will also directly contribute to the definition of climate change-related indicators. Similarly, ECE has identified multiple synergies between the Goals and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, promoting quantitatively and qualitatively sustainable use of transboundary water resources. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, based on principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, helped to inspire a declaration on the application of principle 10 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

47. While providing assistance and training on how to utilize software for data collection and dissemination, ECLAC has developed new and improved analytical methodologies. Specifically, it has provided Governments with technical support, training and software collaboration on modernizing systems for processing and disseminating population and housing censuses. Its assistance in modernizing such systems has not been limited to Latin America, given that many African countries also now use the software to update their population and housing information online. ECLAC has also worked with the World Food Programme (WFP) in developing an innovative methodology to analyse nutritional problems and the social and economic costs of both malnutrition and excess weight. That methodology has led to a partnership, with the African Union Commission, ECA and WFP working with ECLAC to adapt the methodology used in the study on the cost of hunger currently being conducted in seven African countries.

48. ECA was the first to recognize the magnitude of the negative impact illicit financial flows have on development programmes, funding and the governance agenda in Africa. It provided technical assistance on illicit financial flows to the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa during the fourth Joint

Annual Meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in 2011. ECA efforts were fruitful, given that the resulting report was submitted to the Assembly of the African Union at its twenty-fourth ordinary session, in 2015, and a subsequent special declaration on illicit financial flows was issued, affirming the efforts of African Governments to curtail such flows. Increasingly, awareness of the importance of the issue of illicit financial flows is being mainstreamed at the global level.

II. Developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation

A. Additional policy issues addressed by the regional commissions at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings

49. Beyond contributions and processes directly related to the 2030 Agenda, the regional commissions develop, promote and participate in cooperation efforts regarding diverse regional policy issues. High-level activities of the commissions have directly or indirectly supported sustainable patterns of production and consumption, climate change action, strategic advice on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, integration of the Goal targets into national priority frameworks and mainstreamed awareness of common challenges within groups of developing countries with special needs.

50. During the second meeting of the Executive Committee of ESCWA, in 2015, member States adopted the ESCWA strategy and plan of action on the 2030 Agenda, formalizing the commitment made by the Commission to supporting its member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A technical unit has been created to ensure coordination and coherence in in its support for member States. Furthermore, ESCWA will prepare periodic reports on activities that provide support for incorporation of the Goals into national development plans; enhance statistical systems; contribute to monitoring and follow-up processes in the Arab region; and assist in the preparation of follow-up reports using official data.

51. ECLAC has further collaborated with strategic partners, such as the French Environment and Energy Management Agency, UNEP, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, ECE, the World Resources Institute and the signatories of the Declaration on the application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, on the development of a regional agreement, supporting the negotiating committee and preparing preliminary instruments. The success of the process is visible in the increase in the number of States that have joined in signing the Declaration, from 10 to 20 in two years, and in the growing public awareness and interest exemplified by greatly increased participation in regional public mechanisms from 200 participants in 2013 to 1,600 by the end of 2015. In addition, ECLAC has supported the Paris Agreement process, organizing informal meetings and bridging regional differences, allowing the 33 ECLAC members to share 21 common positions during the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, contributing to a consensus on climate change negotiations and action on Goal 13 within the region. Lastly, ECLAC regional

cooperation efforts have produced positive results and met expectations of partners and donors in providing support and technical assistance towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The evaluation of two multi-year programmes carried out during 2014-2015 confirmed the effect and effectiveness of ECLAC initiatives in cooperation processes and target thematic areas.[1,2]

52. At the third session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, ESCAP member States suggested a regional road map for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Parameters were agreed on to guide the development of the road map, namely that it should serve to enhance cooperation at the regional level; that it would put particular emphasis on developing countries, especially the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and other countries with special needs, while maintaining the universality of the 2030 Agenda and taking into account different national contexts; and that, by 2017, member States would identify priority areas and practical means of implementation. For the last-mentioned aspect, ESCAP has already initiated needs assessments and gap analyses through multi-stakeholder consultations. Furthermore, at its fourth session, held in March 2016, the ESCAP Committee on Social Development underscored the importance of integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, noting priority issues for action, including supporting the school-to-work transition for young people, gender equality, rights for older persons and persons with disabilities and strengthening positive links between migration and development.

B. Promoting coherence at the regional level through the regional coordination mechanisms

53. The regional commissions, working through their regional coordination mechanisms, have striven to promote collaboration and increase coordination and policy coherence among United Nations entities and development programmes at the regional level. The regional coordination mechanisms mandated by the Economic and Social Council and convened by the commissions in all regions continue to prove their critical role in providing a bridge between the organizations of the United Nations system and non-United Nations regional and subregional organizations, forging policy coherence and the alignment of efforts in the regions. The mechanisms have also employed distinct and innovative approaches to the implementation of the Goals and in promoting knowledge- and experience-sharing among member organizations.

54. ECA has worked through the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa to raise awareness of the implementation of the Goals, aligning and synergizing common regional goals with the implementation of the Goals, setting up capacity-building and technical assistance programmes and developing studies on programmes for finance and food security. Specifically, ECA has aligned the

[1] ECLAC, *Evaluación del Programa de Cooperación Técnica de la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) y la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) 2010-2012. Informe de evaluación* (December 2014).

[2] ECLAC, *Review of the German Bilateral Technical Cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)*. Final assessment report (Santiago, January 2016).

clusters of the Mechanism with the strategic outcomes of Agenda 2063, committing itself to harmonizing a 10-year capacity-building plan and establishing an all-inclusive and results-oriented regional development cooperation framework. ECA has also increased the number of joint capacity-building projects at both regional and subregional levels within the Mechanism. Furthermore, it has produced a study on the feasibility of a self-financing mechanism for regional integration and developed a regional food security programme covering six countries in East Africa to mainstream intelligent transport systems in infrastructure corridors.

55. ESCWA and the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab region met in November 2015 in Cairo to agree on issues, including the adaptation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda, migration and forced displacement. The States members of the Mechanism agreed to undertake coordinated capacity-building activities and disseminate knowledge on issues such as mainstreaming the Goals into national development plans and fiscal frameworks, bridging humanitarian assistance and long-term development, addressing cross-border challenges and tailoring local indicators to measure implementation of the Goals. The Mechanism also produced a situation report on international migration in 2015 to track migration patterns and highlight developments in migration governance. In addition, the Mechanism has created a working group on climate change and a general working group on the 2030 Agenda to coordinate efforts on sustainable development, finance development, promote South-South cooperation and develop a regional data base of indicators for the Goals for future follow-up and tracking.

56. ECE and the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Europe and Central Asia link and integrate activities related to the Goals at regional, subregional and national levels. Recently, work within the Mechanism has further intensified, along with the process of shaping cross-sectoral and integrated Goals. Specifically, the Mechanism is working to position itself strategically as a hub for joint efforts on the implementation and follow-up, advocacy and analysis of the Goals and as a platform for issue-based coalitions that involve non-United Nations partners. During a meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2015, the Mechanism leveraged the opportunity to agree on priority actions, including strengthening joint analytical approaches; forging partnerships and intensifying joint advocacy; promoting policy universality; supporting the leveraging of resources, including resource mobilization; strengthening capacities for monitoring and review; and intensifying collaboration between the regional commissions and United Nations country teams.

57. ESCAP has worked to increase regional and international policy and coherence of implementation of the Goals through thematic working groups of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, analysing policy and advocacy work, sharing information, conducting joint programming and supporting partners through analytical, normative and advocacy products. Civil society groups, the United Nations Development Group and other specialized agencies have worked in collaboration with the Mechanism to mainstream policy implementation. Specifically, the Mechanism has worked on the development of a core set of regional gender indicators as a guideline for its members, has produced the *Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2015: Migrants' Contributions to Development*, a report on migration trends, good practices on migration policies and the protection of migrant rights. In addition, ESCAP has also finalized through the Mechanism a regional report on youth. To mainstream the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, ESCAP has worked to reposition the thematic working groups

that were formerly driven by the Millennium Development Goals towards integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into the national policy frameworks of the Governments in the region.

58. ECLAC leveraged the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Latin America and the Caribbean to support preparation for the third International Conference on Financing for Development by gathering together agencies, funds and programmes, together with other relevant partners and stakeholders. Participants agreed on the importance of mainstreaming gender into the indicators for the Goals; on funding needs going beyond official development assistance and public financing; and on the importance of collaborating with private investors. Deliberations were also held in the context of the Mechanism to support and coordinate the implementation and follow-up efforts on the Goals and debate the long-term positioning of the United Nations development system within the region.

C. Enhanced cooperation between the regional commissions

59. Since the previous report, the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions have met five times: twice in July 2015 on the margins of their annual dialogue with the Economic and Social Council in New York and at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa; twice in September 2015 on the occasion of the annual coordination meeting hosted by ESCWA in Beirut and on the margins of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in New York; and once in October 2015 on the margins of their annual dialogue with the Second Committee of the General Assembly. Those meetings have proved crucial in forging coordinated positions and strategic responses to the deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda, including through papers articulating the role and assets of the commissions in supporting the implementation and follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda by States. They were also useful in coordinating joint activities by the commissions on the margins of global conferences.

60. In 2016, the Executive Secretaries moved to a more flexible modality of meetings through videoconferencing. Four videoconferences had been held by the end of May 2016 to deliberate on collective responses to global developments and coordinated representation at global meetings relating to the follow-up to and review of the Goals and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Those included the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development, the Global Infrastructure Forum, high-level events organized by the President of the General Assembly and segments of the Economic and Social Council. Exchanges of information and experiences in supporting the implementation and follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda in the regions were also held during the videoconferences, as were exchanges in support of other global processes, such as the preparatory processes for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, to be held in Quito in October 2016.